



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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Environment Committee Public Hearing March 16, 2012

Testimony on H.B. 5409, AN ACT CONCERNING PET SHOPS AND CONSUMER REIMBURSEMENT FOR CERTAIN VETERINARY EXPENSES AND PROHIBITING PET SHOPS FROM SELLING DOGS AND CATS OBTAINED FROM SUBSTANDARD DOMESTIC ANIMAL MILLS.

This bill is simply about accountability, basic human compassion for animals, and frankly, consumer protection.

When someone purchases a dog or cat, they are looking to make a worthwhile addition to their family, home and life. Too often you hear of the horror stories of the animal becoming ill from a genetic defect, which can lead to costly medical bills. The first part of this bill will allow the consumer to be reimbursed up to \$500 and allows the pet owner the option of keeping their pet. These are minimal compensations to provide pet owners.

I also fully support Sections 22a-381d, which allows the commissioner to fine a kennel, pet shop, grooming facility or training facility for not maintaining acceptable sanitary and humane conditions, which can result in animals contracting contagious, infections or communicable diseases.

I would also like to bring your attention to Section 4, which I feel is absolutely necessary. This section lists specific living conditions that animals not only need, but deserve, such as:

Where dogs or cats are housed in a cage without being allowed daily exercise,

(2) where dogs or cats are not maintained in a dry and reasonably clean condition,

- (3) that does not provide adequate protection for such dogs or cats from the elements,
- (4) that does not provide clean and potable water for such dogs and cats at all times,
- (5) that does not provide proper and nutritious food for such dogs or cats,
- (6) that houses dogs or cats in an enclosure with floors that are not constructed in a manner that protects the dogs' or cats' feet and legs from injury,
- (7) that houses dogs or cats in an enclosure that does not allow them to turn around freely or to sit, stand or lie down comfortably, or
- (8) that maintains dogs or cats in an enclosure that is not at least six inches higher than the head height of the tallest dog or cat in such enclosure.

(b) No pet shop licensed pursuant to section 22-344 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, shall sell a dog or cat to the public if such dog or cat was obtained by such pet shop from a substandard domestic animal mill.

In Connecticut, we have many reputable breeders, rescues and shelters that offer healthy dogs and cats for sale or adoption. There is no excuse for there to be so much disparity between these stores or breeders. It's unfortunate that we have to legislate humane treatment, but the sad truth is, there are people who view animals as only a source of profit.

I have volunteered for many years with local animal rescue groups that take in animals that are abandoned or abused. Many times the dogs they rescue are pure breeds that were purchased from a pet store that used puppy mills. Puppy mills are well known for their inhumane treatment and inter breeding of animals for the sole purpose of turning a maximum profit.

Often times, the puppies produced in these mills are genetically compromised and suffer lifelong health problems or even death. These dogs spend their entire lives in small cages, many times unable to stand up or turn around until they are no longer useful and released to shelters, rescues or sometimes put down.

Puppy mills are not only inhumane to animals, but they cause unnecessary emotional pain to those people who eventually purchase these puppies. These animals have become ill, suffer life long diseases that cost their owners thousands of dollars. There is nothing worse than a family bringing home a new puppy and having it suffer and potentially die after a few months, especially when all that family wanted was to give the animal a loving home.

This bill will protect consumers and animals alike, promote responsible pet sales and I urge the committee's support.